



Conducted by
Wes Kenney

GRADUATE CONDUCTOR
Drew Mendizabal

Pulling the Heartstrings

FEBRUARY 25, 2021 | 8 PM



Colorado State University



PROGRAM :

SERENADE (1957) / WILLIAM GRANT STILL (1895-1978)

ADAGIETTO FROM SYMPHONY NO. 5 (1902) GUSTAV MAHLER (1850-1911)

Conducted by Drew Mendizabal

CARMEN SUITE (1967) / RODION SHCHEDRIN (B. 1932)

- I. Introduction
- II. Dance
- III. First Intermezzo
- IV. Changing of the Guard
- V. Carmen's Entrance and Habanera
- VI. Scene
- VII. Second Intermezzo
- VIII. Bolero
- IX. Torero
- X. Torero and Carmen
- XI. Adagio
- XII. Fortune Telling
- XIII. Finale

PROGRAM NOTES:

Serenade, for Orchestra (1957)

WILLIAM GRANT STILL

The musical serenade has evolved over the centuries from a light night piece for special occasions in a collection of moments to a free form work that can still evoke feelings expressed by a composer. *The Serenade, for orchestra* (1957) represents the form that this genre had become in the 20th century. The work was originally written by William Grant Still (1895-1978) for a small chamber orchestra in one movement, containing the elements of blues that Still incorporated into his oeuvre. The cellos sing at the beginning with their luscious middle and high register, painting for us a lovely melody supported by the rest of the orchestra. This melody engages in dialogue with solo violin before returning to the principal cello theme. This cello theme resolves after a quick change of pace and wonder in the middle.

Still studied the violin at 15 and learned an array of other instruments as his musical interest grew. He studied composition at Oberlin College in 1916 and was starting to gain recognition as an arranger and composer when he finished his formal studies. His musical output consists of chamber works, operas, choral works, and symphonies, and his is the first music to be performed by a major symphony orchestra. He is known today as the “Dean of Afro-American Composers”. Still’s work during the Harlem Renaissance and his engagement in Pan-American music are continually being discovered and studied. His work provides a freshness to the American compositional scene of the 20th century, and further studies show just how masterful he was at composition.

Adagietto from Symphony no. 5 (1902)

GUSTAV MAHLER

The *Adagietto* is most famously known as the love letter that Gustav Mahler (1850-1911) sent to his beloved Alma Schindler in the year 1901; it was a ‘song without words’ which exclaimed his passions for the young socialite. Alma—a fine musician and composer herself—understood the meaning of his love in the manuscript score. The two were soon engaged a few days later after only a month of knowing one another. They celebrated years of happiness and turbulence both romantically and personally; however, Mahler was true to the meaning of his love letter and continued loving Alma to his death in 1911.

Although the premiere of the symphony in 1904 was met with scorn—due to Mahler’s gigantic orchestral force and brute sounds—the *Adagietto* gained its reputation even during Mahler’s final years. The passing of years after the symphony’s premiere established this movement as stand-alone piece. It has been used in popular culture and to commemorate the passing of figures such as JFK and Bernstein. Regardless of the occasion, musicians and listeners alike are transported and transformed by Mahler’s brilliant movement, creating a meaningful and reflective experience for all.

This 'little adagio' takes listeners to an escape filled with beguiling sonorities and rich textures from the orchestral harp and strings. It is positioned as the fourth movement of the symphony and serves as a movement of reflection and deep passion between the exuberant Scherzo and the brilliant *Rondo-Finale*. Mahler's use of strings with harp creates a soothing blend of sound for maximal effect in its most heartfelt and softest moments. The music begins with a timid declaration and leads us through anguish, desire, and affirmation with the final chord tugging at our ears, leaving us suspended before receiving the ultimate resolution.

Carmen Suite

RODION SHCHEDRIN

Shchedrin reworked most of the salient themes from Bizet's *Carmen* into a suite for percussion and strings. All of the tunes are recognizable if you are acquainted with this most popular opera. He chose the strings for their singing quality and used percussion for its preciseness. His percussion color is drawn from 28 different instruments and a wide variety of mallets to be played by five players. His instructions to the orchestra such as "mit einem Schlag der Saiten gegen das Griffbrett." (with a hit on the side of the fingerboard) or "mit Nagel" (with the fingernail) expands the ensemble color palette further.

There is other music as well, such as the quick tune used in the Farandole movement of Bizet's *L'Arlesienne Suite*. Some of the themes are simply a slightly altered orchestration—something heard in the Adagio as a full "fate" statement out of the original overture which is then followed by a string singing version of Don Jose's "Flower Aria." Other effects include rhythmic interpolation of added beats or leaving out the melody in repetition (Torero.)

Although the original opera can clock in at nearly three hours, Shchedrin's piece is much shorter, though a still substantial 45 minutes. The premiere took place at the Bolshoi Ballet in 1967 with the composer's wife Maya Plisetskaya in the lead dance role.

Shchedrin is one of the most celebrated Soviet composers after World War 2. Much of his output adhered to the "soviet realism" ideals required of composer' at the time. However, Shchedrin managed to slip in at times serialism, jazz, and aleatory techniques into his pieces which caused him some issues with authorities. The sexual overtones from the opera and the reverence felt for the opera caused a cool reception and a cancellation of a second performance. None other than Dmitri Shostakovich went head to head with the Ministry of Culture in Shchedrin's defense which made a second performance possible and launched the work into our repertoire.



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COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

WES KENNEY, Conductor

ANDREW MENDIZABAL, Graduate Teaching Asasistant

Violin I

Dmitri Ascarrunz, *Concertmaster*
Landon Fennell, *Assistant Concertmaster*
Rhea Chan
Mary Fox
Peng Liu
Laura Mariea
Amelie Peccoud
Steven Hsu

Violin II

Madison Kubala*
Brooke Der
Hallie Harris
Rachel Nieves
Tim Patawaran
Chris Snell

Viola

Carly Dekker*
Jensen Bargones
Troy Cao
Garret Figueroa
Cristian Gade
Laurel Ladzinski
Madelyn Reynolds
Hailey Simmons
Percy Slovut
Julia Vance

Cello

Faith Rohde *
Laurel Ave
Amber Ketzenberger
Annie Koppes
Alex Koster

Bass

Zachary Niswender*
Thomas Hasler
Max Johnson
Myah Precie
Hunter Allen
Wesley Daucsavage

Percussion

Christian Kuhlman*
Ben Stordeur
Derek Summers
Jalen Thompson
William Wilson
Zach Van Hook

Harp

Abigail Enssle

Piano

Dr. Juhyun Lee



WES KENNEY was recently named a 2020 Honored Artist by The American Prize. He is now in his eighteenth year as Professor of Music and Director of Orchestras at Colorado State University. He conducts the CSU Symphony and Chamber Orchestra as well as CSU Opera productions and teaches graduate conducting. Mr. Kenney has led the orchestra to many new milestones, including first ever at CSU performances of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, Mahler symphonies No. 1 and 5, two Strauss tone poems, the Bartok *Concerto for Orchestra*, and the Bruckner *Symphony No. 5*. In 2014 he was named Music Director of the Denver Young Artists Orchestra—the premiere youth orchestra in the state of Colorado—and has taken that

orchestra on two tours through Italy, France, Austria, Czech Republic, and Spain. He has also led them in two well-received concerts at Carnegie Hall. With Mr. Kenney on the podium, DYAO has won multiple prizes for its performances and presentation of contemporary music.

Mr. Kenney is also currently in his 18th season as Music Director of the fully professional Fort Collins Symphony, notable this past year for being the only orchestra in the country to play a live concert on July 4, 2020. In the summer of 2004 he was named to an additional post of Music Director of Opera Fort Collins, helping that organization establish a full season of three productions a year. Mr. Kenney was named the 2009 Outstanding Teacher by the Colorado American String Teachers Association. He was also awarded the Grand Prize in the summer 2007 Varna (Bulgaria) International Conducting Competition. He traveled back to Bulgaria in 2008 for concerts in Vidin and to conduct *La Traviata* in Stara Zagora.

Mr. Kenney is a frequent guest conductor of professional and educational ensembles. Recent appearances include the Lviv (Ukraine) Philharmonic, Changwon (South Korea) Philharmonic, Vietnamese National Symphony Orchestra (Hanoi), Colorado Symphony, Colorado Music Festival, Lafayette (IN) Symphony and the Acadiana Symphony (LA). He has conducted New Mexico All-State, Virginia All-State, Alabama All-State, and New Hampshire All-State Orchestra. He has given orchestra clinics in all corners of Colorado and is sought after for sessions at the Colorado Music Educators Association Conference. Mr. Kenney is a former president of the Conductors Guild and serves currently on their advisory board.

Mr. Kenney is also in demand as a conducting pedagogue. He has taught alongside Jorge Mester in a Conductors Guild sponsored workshop at CSU and Larry Livingston at CMEA. He has been a guest lecturer at the Conductor's Institute held at Bard College in upstate New York, teaching alongside founder (and the late) Harold Farberman and American Symphony Orchestra Music Director Leon Botstein. He is also one of the founders of the CSU Summer Master's Degree program in conducting, designed to allow Music Educators the opportunity to earn a graduate degree while furthering their conducting studies and remaining in their current position.

Education: San Francisco State University, University of Southern California, Conductors Institute, Hochschule für Musik and Darstellende Kunst (Vienna).



DREW MENDIZABAL is a conductor and clarinetist studying at Colorado State University. He currently studies instrumental conducting under the guidance of Maestro Wes Kenney, in addition to participating in wind and string ensembles. Drew is a native of Las Vegas, Nevada and received his Bachelor of Music Education at the University of Nevada, Reno in 2019, where he studied clarinet and conducting under the direction of Dr. Reed Chamberlin and Dr. Jason Altieri. He has received awards for his leadership and musicianship within the UNR music department and his involvement with the University Bands.

Drew has conducted and performed with community ensembles, classroom ensembles, and university ensembles alike. He plans to continue his education in ensemble leadership after gaining experience in music classrooms and community involvement. He is passionate about providing musical opportunities to students of all ages and backgrounds; Drew hopes to travel and learn as much about other cultural ensemble practices and cultivate new ways to get communities involved in music.

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